

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAPE T 00029 101914Z

46

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

SS-15 NSC-05 PRS-01 PA-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

RSC-01 L-02 H-01 SP-02 IO-10 /064 W

----- 123097

O R 101500Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4303

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0029

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, WA, SF, US

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: OWAMBO ELECTIONS

1. FONMIN MULLER TELEPHONED AMBASSADOR THIS MORNING TO TELL HIM THAT IF EMBASSY WISHED TO SEND REPRESENTATIVE TO OBSERVE OWAMBO ELECTIONS WE COULD DO SO. MULLER SAID THIS WAS NOT AN INVITATION BUT THAT TRAVEL FACILITIES AND ACCOMMODATIONS IN OWAMBO WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE.

2. LAST MONTH BRITISH EMBASSY HERE HAD ASKED FCO FOR PERMISSION TO SEND OBSERVER. TWO DAYS AGO BRITISH EMBASSY RECEIVED PERMISSION IN CABLE FROM FCO. THEY IMMEDIATELY SENT NOTE TO DFA STATING THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEND OBSERVER. INITIAL RESPONSE, IN TELEPHONE CALL FROM SWA DESK OFFICER EKSTEEN, WAS THAT ARRANGEMENTS PROBABLY COULD NOT RPT NOT BE MADE. HOWEVER, THIS MORNING BRITISH RECONFIRMED THAT

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CAPE T 00029 101914Z

PERMISSION GRANTED. SAG STIPULATED, HOWEVER THAT BRITISH

WOULD HAVE TO BEAR COST OF CHARTER FLIGHT, EVEN THOUGH SAG REPRESENTATIVE WOULD BE ON FLIGHT AND WOULD ACCOMPANY BRITISH OBSERVER ON TRIP IN OWAMBO.

3. BRITISH RESPONDED THAT (BECAUSE AMBASSADOR BOTTOMLEY DECIDED IT NOT WORTH EXPENSE OF CHARTER TO SEND OBSERVER), THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO PAY ONLY AS MUCH AS HALF OF CHARTERED AIRCRAFT. THEY EXPECT REPLY TO THIS CONDITION FROM SAG LATER TODAY. BECAUSE SAG OBVIOUSLY WANTS TO HAVE FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES TO OBSERVE ELECTION, BRITISH BELIEVE SAG WILL AGREE TO CONDITION.

4. COMMENT: WHILE IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO SEND OBSERVER (BRITISH HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT OBSERVATION OF ELECTION WOULD INCLUDE EXTENSIVE TOUR THROUGHOUT OWAMBO), THERE OBVIOUS RISK IN SENDING EMBASSY OFFICER TO VIEW ELECTION PROCEEDINGS. IT IS LIKELY THAT PRESENCE OF OBSERVERS WILL BE NOTED BY PRESS. THIS COULD HAVE UNFAVORABLE REPERCUSSIONS IN THAT WE COULD BE CRITICIZED BY AFRICANS AND OTHERS FOR INDIRECTLY INDICATING LEGITIMACY OF SAG EFFORT TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN OWAMBO. FACT THAT SAG HAS DECIDED TO PERMIT OBSERVERS IN OWAMBO AT TIME OF ELECTIONS INDICATES THEY ARE CONFIDENT THAT VOTER TURNOUT WILL BE RELATIVELY HIGH AND WILL WANT TO BE IN BEST POSITION POSSIBLE TO REFUTE ALLEGATIONS THAT, FOR EXAMPLE, PEOPLE FORCED TO GO TO POLLS.

5. APART FROM FOREGOING, AMOUNT OF INFORMATION TO BE GAINED FROM THIS TYPE OBSERVATION PISIT MAY BE FAIRLY MARGINAL AND CAN PRESUMABLY BE ELICITED FROM BRITISH COLLEAGUE, IF HE GOES, AND FROM REPORTERS WHOSE ACCESS TO PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS MAY BE BETTER THAN AN OFFICIAL VISITOR'S WOULD BE. FINALLY AND FUNDAMENTALLY, POSSIBLE AFRICAN CRITICISM OF U.S. OBSERVATION OF ELECTION MIGHT SERIOUSLY DETRACT FROM OUR ABILITY TO SUPPORT OR ENCOURAGE POSSIBLE DIALOGUE BETWEEN SA AND OTHER AFRICAN STATES IN SEARCH OF NAMIBIAN SOLUTION ABOUT WHICH WE WILL SUBMIT FURTHER THOUGHTS SEPARATELY.

6. UNLESS DEPARTMENT BELIEVES WE SHOULD ACCEPT SAG OFFER, WE PLAN TELL SOUTH AFRICANS THAT WE HAVE DECIDED NOT TO SEND OBSERVER. REQUEST DEPT VIEWS BY NIACT IMMEDIATE.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 CAPE T 00029 101914Z

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